

The Knowledge of Nonviolent as a Social Parameter for Peace Building

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Abstract: The concept of Non-violence struggle also refer to as Non-violent Resistance (NVR) has been misconstrued by many to mean different things and the knowledge application in conflict resolution and abating violence is taking by many spectators for granted or to be a natural cause of action. NVR has help to bring peace in the time of conflicts and violence throughout human history than violent struggle. This paper gives a brief account of the historical echo of the application of NVR to bring about peace in society. It also clarifies the concept of Non-violence Resistance (NVR) and reviews the different methods and applications techniques of NVR in the sustenance of Peace in the time of violence. Strong point in this review is the revelation that the different global declaration of peace supports the use of NVR to broker peace and Gandhi's response to the pessimists of the application of NVR "Have you tried? I have and it works". The NVR method of conflict resolution should be a lifestyle based on a conscious strive for truth dealing with the cause rather than the system of conflict.

Keywords: Non-violent Resistance (NVR); Conflict Resolution; Peace Building

1. Introduction

Nonviolence struggle which many scholars referred to as civil resistance in societies is most often misunderstood and mis-interpreted by many who do not have the requisite training in the technique of nonviolent action. Many spectators believe that events just happen and take natural cause. To the contrary, practitioners and crusaders of nonviolent conflict/struggle take deliberate action to fight against policy, power or a system of oppression thereby consciously rejecting the use of violence to achieve their goals of peace building (King & Miller, 2006).

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Throughout history, nonviolent action technique has been successfully used in different conflicts around the globe. History tells of the human cargo trade abolition, trade union and workers right's establishment, enfranchisement of voters, national independence movements and the settlement of many interstate strife, etc (Cohen & Arato, 1994). All these were achieved without a resort to violent measure, guerilla warfare or through the use of armed struggle. The likes of Mahatma K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mary Slessor were saddled and overwhelmed by the collective nonviolent action of Africans in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria and, the globe in the struggle for better and a more humane society devoid of violence and conflict. Violence can only be substantially reduced or better still removed from our society today when there are better and realistic alternatives presented to, accepted and understood by the practitioners and the crusaders of violence. The aim of this paper is to examine how the study and teachings of nonviolent struggle as a social parameter will help to reduce violence and promote peace building in society.

2. Conceptual Clarification

The nonviolent struggle also refers to nonviolent resistance (NVR) is an act and practice to achieve societal peace through the use of civil disobedience, symbols and signs to protest, non cooperation to political and economic activities or other nonviolent method. The nonviolent struggle was popularized through the India leader Mahatma Gandhi on his strives to free Indians form British Colonialism. It is clear that numerous people do share in the nonviolent political action and it is belief that nonviolent action expedites the dealing with conflict and causes transformational social change, imperative to our daily living. The nonviolent struggle techniques are often difficult to visualize as compare to the violence techniques to conflict transformation. The violence techniques are obvious and have a tangible strategies and weapons. Nonviolent crusaders see the nonviolent techniques as a technique for all. Nonviolent techniques are available to all that help breaks the cycle of violence and counter-violence in society. The technique gives room for conversation and focus the media attention on the fundamental issue of struggle rather than the tangible act of violence as we normally see in today's world we live in. Nonviolent techniques to struggle are the surest way the oppressed achieve global or international community sympathy. The outcomes are constructive, rather than destructive, tweaking toward societal peace building and

arriving at a given truth of situation. The nonviolent method of struggle is practically entrenched in major religious teachings particularly in the Africa Cultural practice. As an ethical philosophy, nonviolent upholds moral behavior that excludes the use of violence and provides means to secure peaceful end.

The knowledge of nonviolent technique actually refers to technique for social and political change that utilizes nonviolent sanctions instead of insurgency and military weaponry. As observed earlier, history has recorded the many times nonviolent movement has been used as an alternative to violence and passivity. Africa, for instance, has witnessed diverse struggles and oppression internally and externally and the different violent approaches to tame these oppression were rather futile; promoting more conflict and hardening the minds of the oppressors. In applying the nonviolent technique, the likes of Mahatma K. Gandhi who closely studied South Africa for 21 years on how the nonviolent technique could be applied to South African's struggle; Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia; Nnamdi Azikwe of Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and the host of others fighting for independence from European Colonialism with nonviolent methods. External oppression manifesting from colonialism and imperial power challenges in Africa were resisted with the use of the nonviolent technique. Taxation policies were resisted, the campaign for more representation, and the improvement on the working conditions for workers, the struggle to reclaim ancestral lands, etc, were also resisted with the nonviolent techniques. In achieving the nonviolent demonstration, carefully planned tactics in the form of petitions, boycotts, delegations, parades and marches, strikes and vigils, among others, were the working tools in the hands of the practitioners. These form of struggle were useful to secure collective bargaining and giving labour the right to organize, citizens to realize economic advances, gain national independence and defy foreign occupations and coup d'état, resist genocide, overturn laws enshrining discrimination and obtain right for the less privileged in the society (King, 2008).

Individually, people do resolve conflicting situations through the use of nonviolent means because they believe that injury, harm and other threat to physical assault cannot help to accomplish the goal of conflict resolution. The nonviolent technique to resolving conflict and building peace is not a signal of passivity or submission. As observed in the work of King (2008), the African nonviolent independence struggle techniques did not represent passivity. Emphasized by Martin Luther King Jr. cited in King (2008), "there is another method which can serve as an alternative to the method of violence and it is a method of nonviolent resistance. A method

that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. The first thing that can be said about this method is that it is not a method of submission or surrender. And there are those who would argue that this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity and so it is not a method to be use” (King, 2008). But that is not true of the nonviolent method. One major reason why there is little documentation and comprehension of this method, in spite of the method’s historical successful accomplishments in peace building is premise on the exclusive role the state occupies in directing political change. Tales and Stories of the history of violent wars are taught and properly documented but the nonviolent technique for transformation of conflict are rarely mentioned or recognized. News media, policy makers and social scientist have failed to study, teach and grasp the power of nonviolent action to conflict transformation (Helvey, 2004).

Many African countries have utilized and benefited from the application of nonviolent method to resolve long standing conflict and oppression. For instance in Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Uganda, Nigeria, Egypt, etc, the technique of nonviolence has help secure independence, offset and overthrow armed militias, fight against internally oppressive government, secure public confident on governance and emancipate and free socio-political and economic captives, etc. Despite its utilization the nonviolence technique is still not a practice for wider recognition among nations in Africa and beyond. This technique and practice is seen as indigenous in African traditions for conflict resistance (King & Miller, 2006; Sharp, 1973). In recognition of the potency of this technique in Africa, the University of Peace (UNPEACE) conducted a nonviolent training program for Civil Society Organization leader in Port Harcourt, Nigeria in November 2005 and in Freetown, Sierra leone in February 2007 to sharpening and spread the knowledge of nonviolent method in conflict (King, 2013). A major study of the nonviolent technique is that of Sharp in 1973. Sharp’s typology and classification of nonviolent method in “The Politics of Nonviolent Action” delineated nonviolent method fundamentally into three action steps: Protest and Persuasion, Non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention (Sharp, 1973). These action steps to conflict resolution are conceptual of classic psychological, social, economic and political methods.

3. There is no Gap between Violent and Nonviolent Struggle

Violence and nonviolence work differently and they are not complementary of each other. When violence is injected into social struggle it helps to destroy the potential for involving civil resistance. In violence, people are whelmed with destruction undermining the self reliant civil resistance (Hart, 1968). The use of violent struggle affects mobilization and recruitment of people into nonviolent mass movement. The oppressed are never uplifted and empowered through violence rather they are subjugated and destroyed. The mixture of violent and nonviolent struggle in peace building defeats the goal of the nonviolent movement (Sharp, 1967).

In African today the most popular dictum for violence is “What is taken from us by violence must be retrieved by violence”. This refrain is alarming throughout Africa despite the fact that it has rarely delivers results (Pope, 2005). Evidence show that in Africa groups who choose the violent means of contention have choosing the means of struggle that gives the oppressive force superiority and advantage to subjugate these group. The oppressive force always possesses the technical knowhow and the military artilleries, the police and the prison system to be use to crush violent struggle or armed group (Lieven, 1993).

For instance, the Niger-Delta youth of Nigeria has in the past submitted to the use of force to compel the government to do their bidding because of the suffering and deprivation that the region suffers. Rather than achieving success the state power was use to subjugate them labeling them as Militants. But the introduction of the nonviolent approach to conflict, though not comprehensive, brought a quasi - remedial solution to the resulting insurgency (i.e. the introduction of the Niger – Delta Amnesty Programme to stop the violence action of the militants in the Niger Delta Region was necessitated after numerous petitions, prints and mass media blackmailing of the Nigeria’s Government and through public demonstration and activism showcasing the real suffering of the Niger Delta People to both local and international community’s).

The act of violence is counter-productive that prolong and complicate disputes turning them into acute conflicts and raising social and economic cost. Every conclusion of violent conflict is likely to destroy democratic environment and breeds dictatorial system (Hamber, 2003). In violence when blood is shared it creates a thirst for revenge and a quest for retaliation lasting generation to generation (Hart, 1968). When there is a strong dispute between parties and they

possess several levels of power, party with smaller or weaker power find it difficult to obtain hearing from the stronger power parties. The only means to get the attention is staging a nonviolent struggle to bring parity to the side of the weaker and balanced the relationship. Some conflict situation demands the use of nonviolent resistance to reach negotiation. Nonviolent resistance should not be presume for the technique for fighting social justice – mediation or arbitration method. In violent conflict mediating and negotiating with tyrant or dictator is futile rather a nonviolent resistance movement will give formidable results (Helvey, 2004).

In violent conflict, why negotiation is not right as Martin Luther King rightly puts it (in Boyle, 2007) is because the negotiation table has never worked in violent conflict settlement, rather direct actions like sit-ins, marches, etc, create a likelihood of crisis and provoke tension in community that have constantly refused to negotiate and force the community to confront the issue. When the pressure of collective nonviolent action unfolds, negotiation may naturally take the right cause. For instance, not until series of strike action and street marches took place the Nigeria government was reluctant to pay attention to the demands of the university system, Nigerian's workers welfare and their salaries, e.t.c. Nonviolent resistance could be used to address strong and difficult conflict. The notion that acute conflict can be negotiated or resolved is a weak presumption and unachievable. Therefore, the synergy of violent and nonviolent action and teachings to control violent conflict is unattainable and unrealistic.

4. Theoretical Deposition

In considering the most appropriate theory that best explains nonviolent struggle as a social parameter for peace building, the author finds out that Gene Sharp theory of power gave a clear explanation. In sharp's classic book "The Politics of Nonviolent Action (1973)" Sharp clearly explains that society is divided into rulers and the subjects and that the power of the rulers to rule is derive from the consent by the subject and that the nonviolent action of withholding and withdrawing consent and non cooperation with government is a way to challenges despotic and dictatorial leadership and also subdue tyrannical system of governance. Sharp's (1973) tries to buttress that the concept of ruler – subject classification and that of consent is implicit to using nonviolent struggle to build a peaceful and trouble free society. This deposition holds that rulers use political and social power available to

achieve objective of holding powers and he conceptualize these rulers as not only government executives but others who exerts religious, military and economic prowess to achieve their motives (Sharp's, 1973). Although Sharp acknowledges that power resides intrinsically in the hands of the rulers, but the basis for the source of power depend intimately upon the cooperation and obedience of the subjects (Sharp's, 1973). The later he called the Content theory of power and that ruler acquires power because there is an active supports from their subjects.

Therefore, the justification for this theory implies that nonviolent action usually constitutes the refusal of subjects to obey and cooperate. The knowledge surrounding the complexity of sharps theory of power can help crusaders of nonviolent movement to develop a better tactics of non – cooperation and non – involvement and also promote good governance.

5. Method to Nonviolent Struggle

Determining the procedures for reaching definite conclusion or the final results are not specified in the application of nonviolent struggle to violent conflict (Bond, 1994). The drive action for nonviolent struggle is derived from contentious interactions between the nonviolent challengers and the group they target. The power that drives nonviolent struggle is in the disruptiveness and the indeterminate cause of action (Schock, 2005). The method for nonviolent struggle as sharp emphasized in his categorization: Protest or Persuasion, Non-cooperation and Nonviolent intervention, is formidable and result driven in peace building.

Sharp (1973), explains that protest or persuasion method in nonviolent struggle sends message to their target and uses civil assemblies, banners, flags, leaflets and painting as protest; marches, mock funerals, parades and petitions. Other protesting methods in nonviolent struggle are vigils, work-out, wearing of symbols, symbolic lighting and sound, etc. The non-cooperation method in nonviolent struggle employs boycotting, suspending assistance and co-operation, different forms of civil disobedience, strikes, resignation from jobs, withdrawal from the system, etc., while the nonviolent intervention method disrupts the social and political activities, defiance of blockages, hunger strikes, protest and sit-ins (Sharp, 1973).

Strike as a method of nonviolent struggle is seen as potent with the aim of temporarily distorting the system to gain attention. This form of non-cooperation with the economy takes several forms like the peasants strikes, sympathy strikes,

bumper strike, lighting strike, limited strike, reverse strikes and the general strike actions, all aimed at bringing justice to the society (King, 2008).

Civil disobedience is considered a critical component of modern civil society. It keeps the vision of a just and democratic civil society by reminding the state the basic tenet of its creation. Civil disobedience campaigners actually form the civil society organization (Cohen & Arato, 1994). These civil society organizations, campaigners of civil disobedience, overwhelmingly concern themselves within constitutional democracy – Rule of Law – do establish right in non-democratic governance. The right of establishment and the dictate of the organization pave way to the formulation of such representative institutions (Cohen & Arato, 1994).

6. Application of Nonviolent method to Violent Struggle

The application of nonviolent method in violent conflict in several circumstances could give realizable and positive social change, transform conflict of nation and interrupt a cycle of vengeful violence (Otite, 1999). The application of nonviolent method could be use to prevent disruptive strife. Conflict management can be achieved through the knowledge of civil resistance. The application of nonviolent method to violent struggle could help transform conflict, restore social justice and reform, enforce national defense; and promote self rule and nation building.

Conflict Transformation: The cycle of relationship in violence have been interrupted through the use of nonviolent struggle technique to accomplish major positive social changes in conflict transformation. Disruptive strife has been prevented with the use of nonviolent sanctions. The case of the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Palestinian land (Gaza Strip) in 2005 that almost escalated into violence was managed with the technique of nonviolent method (King, 2008). The act of resolving conflicts are merely a tip of the ice berg in the transformation of conflicts. Societal structural change has a significant place in conflict transformation. For instance, the conflict transformation in post-apartheid South Africa took a continuous progression and multi level changes to achieve its cause. The success of the nonviolent method to conflict transformation in South Africa could be ascribed to the increasing diffusion of power system and the place of the mass media to activate global responses to such conflict situations (Hamber, 2003).

Restoration of societal equity, social justice and reform: Societal equity among contending parties results from nonviolent strategies to conflict resolution. In the

quest for social reforms civil societies/unions have maximally employed nonviolent method in negotiating and bargaining with management. Nonviolent struggle can give minority parity of power with the majority rather than majority exercising overwhelming power on minorities. The 1960 U.S Civil Right Movement choose the non resistance and non –cooperation tactics that established the black community on equal pedestal with the white, downplaying the ravaging racial oligarchy (Pope, 2005). Civil resistance right take its cause when the basic human right is not presence in laws governing a nation and the judiciary lacks active interpretative power. The nonviolent struggle technique is feared by government because they believe it breeds political conflict, causes strife and can promote the failure of an institutionalized political system. In the pursuit for social justice and reform, the nonviolent method could be use to send message or disclose a problem of governance through petition writing, resignation from job to enforce non-cooperation, strike action, etc (Taylor, 2007). This technique can revisit and revert national priorities to recognize the voice and claims of minority. An illustration of this pointer is in the recent National Conference conducted by the Government of Nigeria. Representatives of the oppressed ethnic group in the country were given a seat to voice their grievances and make useful contribution towards the Nation’s national development.

Enforcement of National Defense: Nonviolent struggle can be used to enforce national defense against authoritative and autocratic governance. By national defense we mean when the leadership of a nation is not rightly and not constitutionally governing the nations and using armed militias to masquerade its dictatorial tendency, causing fragmentation of the nation. The technique make people stand against organized mass violence and rising militias distorting the peace of the nation. Like in the Nigeria insurgency of Boko Haram, the nonviolent method of non-cooperation and non-assistance with these militias to foster their scrupulous act, could help bring them to destruction and also compel the government to take the problem seriously. The use of nonviolent movement like nationwide strike action and seat-ins, can help lure the government to take action against the menace. Also, most subjugations by dictatorial army or militias can be extremely unrealizable when there is prior preparation towards enforcing nonviolent collective civilian resistance (Randle, 1994). The nonviolent collective civilian resistance involves a prior active sanitization of the affected population in advance who will take cause of action (Sharp, 1973). For example the Baltic State used civilian based defense to get their independence in 1991 from the Soviet

Union; Estonia and Lithuania also employed the technique to free themselves from Russia (Lieven, 1993; Beissinger, 2007). Military and political usurpation of power can be devoid by non-cooperation of subordinated government and civil society organization. The 1994 Rwanda Crisis, where the citizens of Bature refused to join Kigali in the mass killings on the instruction of their province governor, is a perfect example of the application of nonviolent method to conflict transformation (Butera, 2002).

Promoting Self Rule and Nation Building: Nonviolent action method promote cohesion and unity in society, which bring about peace in decision making. Nonviolent technique promote the knowledge of struggle without bloodshed and shape the social, political and economic institutions for good governance. As recorded by Gandhi, India self rule from British was possible through nonviolent struggle for independence campaign and sensitization of the entire population in non-cooperation method (Fischer, 1950). Self rule and nation building is rooted on the struggle for peace and social justice, addressing grievance through nonviolent action. Nonviolent struggle in promoting self rule and nation building is truism in the struggle for independence. Most African countries self rule were possible from the resistance and non-cooperation with British rule. Nonviolent struggle can bring equitable and stable long-term result to all parties in conflict transformation and rival party's reconciliation.

7. The Knowledge of Nonviolent Method: It Essence

There exists a great need for the study of nonviolent method to violent conflict. Psychologist, Albert Bandura emphasized that since the act of violence is not inherit in human nature, rather it a learned and acquire behavior; nonviolent act can also be learned (Bandura, 1965). Practitioners of nonviolent struggle have 'nonviolent weapons' at their disposal. The normative construct of nonviolent action is somewhat different from the passivity or acquiescent of society when faced with tyranny or despotism. The knowledge of nonviolent method helps practitioners to secure social justice, mobilize for fair governance, gain justice and remove oppression, etc. This knowledge enlightens the populace on how the cry of the just can be heed, unravel the ineffectiveness of institutional political instruments – elections, referendums, representative bodies and lobbying – to deliver democratic dividend and protect human rights and privileges. In support of Bandura's (1965) assertions, the concern for the teachings of nonviolent struggle is

often expressed on how best to socialize youth in the nonviolent means to solve conflict. Young people are the pointer of target of violent ideology and they are consistently used to perpetuate violence activities. The nonviolent teachings acknowledges' that in violent circumstance people tend to vent anger and become more violent, especially where ideologies of armed struggle have predominance. It is therefore recommended that violence could be significantly reduced or abandoned when realistic alternative is available and understood. These realistic alternative to violent i.e. 'nonviolent method to struggle' is comprehended in the field of Civil resistance and Non – cooperation to despotism. Universities across the globe must embrace the study and teaching of nonviolent methods as a means to savage oppressive governance. Furthermore, it is gainful to state that the violence means to conflict transformation has been tested and still being tested and yet not trusted to deliver any good results.

The technique of nonviolent sanction is appropriately applied to situation where democratic principles are threatened and governmental institutions fails to achieve their goals at the detriment of the populace. The populace should know and understand the option to turn to and can use civil disobedience, strikes, tax resistance, demonstrations, protest, petition, etc, which have in the past worked well in restoring good governance (Carter, 2005; Randle, 1994).

The non violent resistance could be more useful in situation where the growing sphere of civil society is causing social and political change, not in the military, war and ammunition sense but in the political armaments. Violent struggle arises from the same sphere which nonviolent resistance arises from. The knowledge of nonviolent resistance is pivotal and should be entrenched in universities curriculum in Africa. Though several surveys have showed that the Africa culture is well-established in peace building and nonviolent struggle and several universities have embarked on the studies of peace and conflict like never before (Sharp, 1973).

The nonviolent technique places emphasis not on the resolution of conflict but on the management of conflict. As Gandhi observed, the nonviolent struggle is a form of conflict transformation and perhaps a more accurate term than conflict resolution since actual resolution of conflict is rare and transient (Otite, 1999). Nonviolent method to struggle is deeply transformational seeking alteration in the power relation between parties and changes position and roles of interveners (Otite, 1999). Emphasis in the studies of peace and conflict should be shifted from conflict resolution to conflict management or conflict transformation because contemporary

political thought which encourage arbitration, dialogue method, mediation, etc, only address the symptoms of conflict (disputes) and not the fundamental cause of conflict.

8. Promoting Peace – Building Through Nonviolent Struggle

In 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) and the United State of America (USA) held an International Conference/Event to promote the culture of peace through nonviolent struggle tagged: **Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World**. This assemblies and conference was widely accepted and promoted across the globe and was welcomed by many nations most especially in India where a large chunk of supporters group rallied round the establishment of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in promoting peace building. The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) in 1999, (cited in Alkmaar, 2005), clearly stated fundamental points in promoting peace building through nonviolent techniques. Firstly, IFOR stated that youth should be trained and taught on the act of conflict resolution and on how human right is respected. Most violence clashes that lead to unwholesome killings, in some countries, never grieve the mind of youths because of their indoctrination into violence. At all level of the educational system the techniques and act of nonviolence should be taught. Young people should know that it is morally and constitutionally wrong to bully and subjugate others who are lesser than them. Secondly, IFOR emphasized the role of the media in the development of nonviolence approach. The media can help create vigorous awareness through prints and socials to promote the nonviolence techniques. With the social media, the act “propagandizm” will trigger the populace to crave for a transformational system to resist a nonfunctioning government. Also emphasized here, is the absence of “weaponry” from nonviolent struggle. Nonviolent method does not welcome any form of weaponry-driven struggle to fight for societal equity and social justice. Only in the singleness of thoughts and actions among the commons that justice can be delivered to the common. This technique cannot promote peace building where there is deadlock in inter-religious dialogue. A house divided against itself cannot stand. And finally, a deeper study and understanding of the theoretical and practical of the nonviolent techniques will give a balance in the application of knowledge to promote peace building every society.

9. Conclusion

Nonviolent technique for struggle is a method employed to guarantee automatic and successful conflict transformation. For those who are pessimistic about the potency of the nonviolence technique to transform and resolve conflict, Gandhi responded to the pessimists with the following words “Have you tried? I have and it works”. Nonviolence method is a lifestyle based on a conscious strives for truth that seeks to deal with the causes, rather than the system, of conflict (Neass, 1965). The knowledge of nonviolence conflict is worthy to be acquired as a preferred method for political activism because it work perfectly and it’s ethically right in the fight for justice and for peace building in every society.

10. Reference

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